



How can I help my child with reading?

About this booklet

The move from primary to secondary school is an exciting time for parents and children. Your child is growing up and becoming more independent. However, you may be worrying about the extra demands of secondary school and wondering what you can do to help. Many parents feel like this, and it is very natural. This booklet offers you ideas from other parents that you can choose from, to help your child as they move into and through secondary school. One of the best ways you can help your child do well at school is by helping them to enjoy reading for pleasure – whether they like magazines, newspapers, novels or comics. Research shows that children who enjoy reading do better at school, and that parents play a key role in helping to develop this love of reading.

Preparing for reading at secondary school

Your child may be looking forward to the challenges of a new, 'big' school, or may feel worried about the work. You can help support your child's reading by making them the 'expert' and getting them to tell about all the things they already know and can do.

Instant ideas

- Help your child to find books they will enjoy by joining the public library, if you are not already members. It is free to join and many libraries have CDs and DVDs that can be borrowed very cheaply, as well as many different types of books that can be borrowed for free.
- Read together. Try picking reading material about interests or hobbies you share, like your football team or a place you have visited together. 10 minutes a few times a week will make a difference.
- Talk to your child about the types of reading they think they will be asked to do in secondary school; get them to explain to you what they already know about types of non-fiction (factual writing), and try to match them to the subjects your child does at school.
- Chat about which books or magazines your child might read, to learn more about the subjects they will be doing at secondary school.
- Buy a book, book token or magazine as a present/reward. Try making time to borrow picture books from the library in French or Spanish, depending on which language they will be learning, or ask a librarian or bookseller about the Horrible Histories or Murderous Maths series and other funny books about school topics.
- Go online to have a look at sites that might be useful for different subjects. All libraries have free internet access which can be booked. For information about safe websites for children, visit the Parents Information Network at www.pin.org.uk or Parents Online at www.parentsonline.gov.uk
- Go along to an event at the library together. Most libraries run the Summer Reading Challenge, a fun scheme that encourages children to read by giving them rewards like stickers, bookmarks and medals. You could encourage your child to take part.

Supporting Reading at KS3

Your child will be studying more subjects at secondary school, and will be working with many different types of reading materials, from newspaper articles and adverts to scientific explanations and instructions. Parents who support their children's education make a real difference to how well their child does, and there are lots of quick things you can do to help.

Instant ideas

- Try some skimming and scanning together. Skimming is when you read through a piece of text quickly to find out what the main idea is; scanning is glancing through a piece of text to find a specific piece of information. You can do this with a newspaper – perhaps ask your child to find something out for you. Why not ask them to scan a newspaper for news about a favourite footballer or to find out the weekend weather, or get them to skim read a recipe to tell you the basic steps?
- Help your child to work out what an unfamiliar word means by getting them to read the rest of the sentence and look for clues.
- Help by testing your child when they have spellings to learn, and by encouraging them to look up words they don't know in a dictionary. 9 Try making time to:
- Build up the number of words your child knows – their vocabulary. As they go through secondary school, your child will need to know specialist words and recognise them when they are reading. To help them learn these words, you could ask your child to explain to you what they mean.
- Read books or plays that your child needs to study for school – in Year 9 English your child will study two scenes from a Shakespeare play. It can really help them if you read these together, and talk about the language and characters. Why not learn a few short quotations together as a competition?

Supporting GCSE Reading across a range of all subjects

During GCSE courses students have to do longer classwork or coursework which counts towards their final grade, as well as reading many different things to help them pass the course. You will find that your child has much more homework and you can make a difference by helping your child to manage their time. Reading for pleasure can get squeezed out as the amount of homework grows and parents can help by encouraging rest, relaxation and reading as well as school work!

Instant ideas

- Cut out newspaper articles about topics your child is studying.
- Read together if your child is having problems with reading in a particular subject.
- Encourage your child to go to a study support group. Many schools and libraries run free after-school groups – find out if there is one near you and suggest to your child they go along. They could meet new people, and will get help with their homework as well.
- Text message a good read to your child's mobile phone, if they have one, or send them an email with some recommendations from friends' children or from a newspaper.

Try making time to:

- Speak to your child's subject teacher to see if there is anything that they could read that would help their studies or that would help them enjoy a topic.
- Talk about everyday topics, encouraging your child to be the 'expert' and use the technical terms they are learning at GCSE. For example, your child could tell you about tomorrow's weather using words such as precipitation, humidity and isobars, or they could explain how a circuit works when you switch on the light.